THE

MATRIX

NEW SPECIAL F/X MAKE ABSTRACT MEDIA THEORY VISIBLE

A SMALL PRESENTATION

BY

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CONTENT

0. Introduction – What is the Matrix?

Ladies and Gentlemen I welcome you to this small but elusive presentation today. I want to ask you to do one unusual thing first. Please close your eyes, make yourself comfortable and listen to what you hear .

(Begin Matrix Soundtrack)

Have you ever had a dream, that you where absolutely sure it was real?

What if you where unable to wake from that dream?

How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world.

How can you be sure that everything that happens in your live is real?

(Wait for music switch)

Maybe it is influenced by something that is so normal to your live, because it is created by humans that you don't even notice any more, that it controls the way you behave, you act and even how you feel.

What if that something would be the world of media that surrounds us?

What if these media would only pretend to show the real world?

What if you couldn't differ the real world, from the media-simulated world anymore?

(Raise voice:)

What if we take that thought even one step further?

What if the reality that consists of the world we life every day, would only be electric input in our brains?

What if everything we experience would be only a big virtual computer simulation?

Then we would live in a Matrix.

What is a Matrix?

First: The Matrix is the essence of an abstract media theory called „The Simulation Theory"

➢ Developed by Jean Baudrillard who created very controversial discussions with his idea of a dead of reality from 1978 till now.

Second: The Matrix is a new Warner Bros. Motion Picture

➢ which can be regarded as a gun-slinging, kung-fu fighting, special f/x, action movie or as the first true filmed version of the mentioned simulation theory, which could so far only be described in words, and took a lot of abstract thinking to discuss it.

In the short time we have, I want to give you a small inside glimpse of the Simulation Theory, show you how it is connected to the movie The Matrix, why the development of special effects where necessary for the production of this movie and finally: find at least an idea how we could use theory and movie to reflect the reality around us.

Warner Bros. advertise their movie with the slogan "No one can be told what The Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself". This is the reason why I wanted you to close your eyes. To get a first impression of the difficult topic, which is media-created reality. This is not a promotion, but if you ever come to see the movie Matrix, you might have a different angle on seeing it and in addition you might have an idea what media theory is good for.

(Wait for music switch)

Please open your eyes and decide if the main part of this presentation "The Matrix – New Special Effects make abstract media theory visible" is real or not.

(Soundtrack – fade out)

1. The Matrix — The Simulation Theory

The death of reality

In the time we have, I can't give you a full report of every detail of his theory, which is in fact **pretty complex**, but I can give you the **basic rules how it works**. Jean Baudrillard claims in his theory that **reality is dead**. **Everything that surrounds us is part of a big simulation.** This simulation is the world we live in, it is our reality, which is in terms of the theory not the real reality, but the **Hyper Reality**, which is **not build from real things anymore and only consists of signs.**

A sign is in the science of semiotics, **something that stands for something else**. So there is a **signifier that leads through our interpretation to the real thing, the reference**.

(Chart – Semiotic Triangle)

Semiotic Triangle:

Given Reality

Hyper Reality
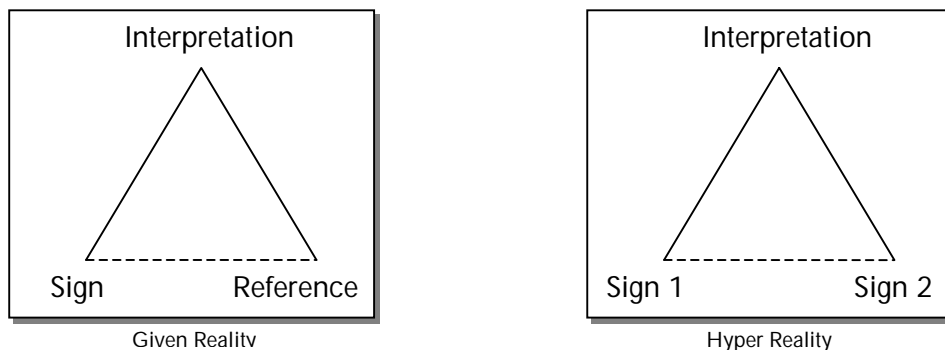
In a real world this triangle works and always **leads to material objects** of the given reality. In the world of simulation our **Interpretation doesn't lead to a real thing, but to another sign**.

(Examples – Milka Cow, War, Love, Dinosaurs)

So we end up having **two realities**: One that consists of the **every day live we live**, where we only follow signs, **which is called Hyper Reality** and one which lies behind it, **hidden from signs the media around us produce**. We have **lost the ability to differ between reality and the world of signs.**

The important thing about this theory is that it doesn't only talk about **a twisted reception** of reality but of **the death of reality**. One thing witch is **hard to accept** and **not even easy to think** but is in the analysis of events **not to be confirmed and not to be denied**, because you always can find proves for both.

2. The Matrix — The Motion Picture

The Story

Neo, a character played by Keanu Reeves is a **computer specialist** who works for a big Software company. In his spare times, he **develops and deals with forbidden virtual reality** programs. In the scene of the virtual reality dealers go rumors around about a program called The Matrix, with a **data terrorist called Morpheus**. Neo is contacted by a group of **resistance fighters who offer him The Truth**. From curiosity **he accepts** and learns the unbelievable: The world he lives in is a **big computer simulation**, build by intelligent machines **who feed humans**

with emotions, stress and so the humans generate brain function and the **energy from which the machines feed**. The real state of humanity is to live **hooked up and completely wired in breeding cases where nothing moves, but there minds**.

What seemed to be reality is in fact **The Matrix. A perfect virtual reality simulation**. After accepting the real reality neo takes his fight against The Matrix.

Since the Matrix is only a computer program the biggest challenge is to **overcome the fears of the real world**. All limitations of the matrix are only **mental barriers**. Neo has to learn that everything he thinks can be made real, because in the real world, **all that is free are the thoughts.**

How that looks, we gonna see in this small trailer - which is unfortunately in German.

(Warner Bros. Trailer)

NEW SPECIAL EFFECTS:

All right, an **action flic** with a pretty **complicated story** and a lot of guns. But that is not the interesting thing about that movie. From the media science point of view this movie is the first that takes any **thoughts about media generated reality to a new step.**

It not like in **The Truman Show**, that a human is captured in a **simulation created by humans**. The humans are **captured without their knowledge** from something they generated – the machines.

To show that the matrix, or our real world is not real anymore, the producers have taken **every known technique for special f/x** and went **one step further** in transferring the very expensive **"Flow Mo"** technique, which was so far only used in TV-Ad-Spots or music videos, to the big screen.

The technique has is special character in showing something which a **normal human eye can't see**, for example **s.b. moving in slow motion** (which is of course not new) and the **camera moving in real** time around him (that is new!). Or somebody freezing in the air and the camera moves on.
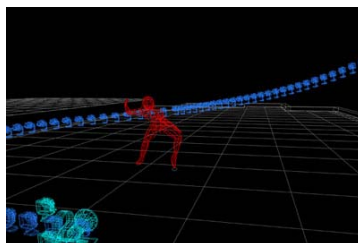
Bullet Time:

Flow Mo works with around **hundred still cameras in a circle**, which shoot single pictures in **shifted only for a fragmend of a second**.

(Chart Bullet Time)
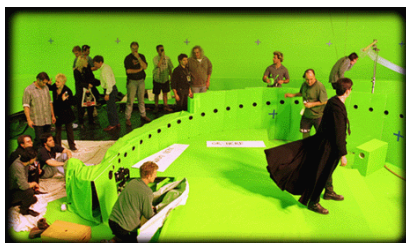
the set   the calculation   the cameras

(M TV Special "Bullet Time")

3. Conclusion – Riot of the signs?

We have seen that the movie The Matrix is a very **postmodern** movie. It can be regarded as a regular action thriller or it can be **analyzed as the incarnation of a media theory**.

But the most interesting thing about that whole theme of media simulation and the dead of reality combined with the movie The Matrix leads to one point which I'd like to discuss with you:

On one hand, the movie gives a **warning** about what could happen to our world, if we develop **virtual intelligence to carelessly**, and uses the **old fear of humankind** that machines could take over the power. On the other hand, the producers of that movie did **one more step in making machines more intelligent** by developing new special effects, to show, what actually can't be seen.

So on the end they developed **new simulations to fight the simulation.**

Is that a riot of the signs or a way to lead us even more into a world that only consists of signs?.

I'm interested in your opinion, **how strong media influence your life** and how far you follow the idea of anything, a matrix or something else, in **taking over "reality".**

Thanks for your attention, I'm glad to answer your questions know and open a hopefully controversial discussion.

Extra: Literary definition:

➢ Dictonary: Matrix derives from Latin and means „dam", „uterus", „source", „reason"

➢ Oxford Advanced Learners: Place where something begins to develop (e.g. the cover of genes)

➢ Mathematics: Arrangement of numbers, symbols, etc. in a grid, treated as a single quantity of mathematical operations

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4. Literature:

Baudrillard, Jean (1978): *Agonie des Realen*, Merve, Berlin

Blask, Falko (1995): *Baudrillard zur Einführung*, Junius, Hamburg

Eco, Umberto (1977): *Zeichen – Einführung in einen Begriff und seine Geschichte*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Main

Großklaus, Götz (1995): *Medien-Zeit - Medien-Raum*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Main

Warner Bros. (1999): *The Matrix*: Presseinformation, Hamburg

Warner Bros. (1999): *The Matrix*: Product-Information, Hamburg